

A ROMANTIC'S CIVIL WAR: JOHN ESTEN COOKE, STONEWALL JACKSON, AND THE IDEAL OF INDIVIDUAL "GENIUS"

WALLACE HETTLE

IN 1996, the Civil War novel *Gods and Generals* was a bestseller. The book portrayed Confederate General Stonewall Jackson as a man full of peculiarities, from his plain uniform to his alleged penchant for habitually sucking on lemons in the midst of battle. The image of Jackson and the lemon has long endured, and pilgrims to Jackson's grave today sometimes still leave behind lemons. Author Jeff Shaara, who attempted in his novel to be true to historical sources, did not invent the story of Jackson's odd fondness for the fruit: he appropriated a well-known feature of the general exhibited in numerous biographies. Jackson's strangeness, exemplified by a dingy uniform, strict observance of the Sabbath, and hypochondria, has been such a historical staple that a popular biography of Jackson for young readers perfectly captures the conventional portrait of Jackson in its title, *Stonewall Jackson: The Eccentric Genius*.¹

How did Americans come to see Jackson as both strange and odd, an admixture of personal qualities captured indelibly in the image of the lemon-sucking warrior? The original source for the story comes from the Virginia writer John Esten Cooke, who wrote both fiction and nonfiction on the Army of Northern Virginia, and whose work sometimes blended the two genres. Jackson's campaigns received massive attention in the Confederate press, but accounts of his eccentricity are few prior to Cooke's depiction of Jackson in a series of articles

Wallace Hettle is an associate professor at the University of Northern Iowa.

1. On visitors to Jackson's grave, see http://www.civilwaralbum.com/misc/lexington_va1.htm. Accessed on 5 January 2005; Jeff Shaara, *Gods and Generals* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 19, 235, 289; Allan Carpenter, *Stonewall Jackson: The Eccentric Genius* (Vero Beach, Fla.: Rourke Publications, 1987).

for the *Southern Illustrated News*.² Jackson's authorized and most thorough biographer, Robert Lewis Dabney, whose work first appeared in 1864, never portrayed Jackson as peculiar or unusual. Neither did Jackson's wife, Mary Anna Jackson, who wrote an account of her husband in the 1890s, nor did the Confederate press while Jackson was still alive.³ Those close to Jackson, and those most vested in the fortunes of the Confederacy, had more interest in emphasizing the general's piety and military brilliance rather than his strangeness.

Yet by focusing on Jackson's alleged oddities, Cooke could charm publishers and readers. Seeking a colorful picture of the Confederate warrior, Cooke originated what Jackson biographer James I. Robertson, Jr. calls the "myth" of the general sucking lemons in the heat of battle. The image later reemerged in the lively memoir by Confederate general Richard Taylor, whose portrait of Jackson closely mirrored Cooke's. Building on these sources, later historians adopted a similar image of Jackson as eccentric. Therefore, it became an enduring feature in biographies of the general.⁴ *Gods and Generals* did not so much get the story wrong, as it followed an apocryphal detail that had crept into the historical literature.

To examine how that image became prevalent in shaping popular understanding of a great military leader, it is worthwhile to examine Cooke, its original purveyor. Before the Civil War, John Esten Cooke was a genuine rarity: a self-supporting southern man of letters. He wrote essays for southern periodicals such as the *Southern Literary Messenger*, Northern magazines such as *Harper's*, as well as numerous novels. The best of Cooke's fiction won both popular acclaim and critical approval. Cooke was the best-known novelist of the day to fight on either side during the Civil War. His service, which stretched from First Bull Run to Appomattox, combined with his able pen to make him a leading literary

2. On Jackson's portrait in the Confederate press, see J. Tracy Power, "There Stands Jackson Like a Stone Wall": The Image of General Thomas J. 'Stonewall' Jackson in the Confederate Mind, July 1861–November 1861" (Master's Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1984). My own survey of Confederate newspapers in the first two years of the war found little evidence for Jackson's eccentricity. For a muted discussion of Jackson's personality, see the correspondent "Hermes."

3. Robert Lewis Dabney, *The Life of and Campaigns of Lt. General T. J. (Stonewall) Jackson* (New York: Blelock and Co., 1866; reprint, 1983); Mary Anna Jackson, *Memoirs of Stonewall Jackson* (Louisville: Prentice Press, 1895).

4. John Esten Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson and the Old Stonewall Brigade*, ed. Richard Barksdale Harwell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1954), 10; Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War*, ed. Richard Barksdale Harwell (New York: Arno Press, 1955), 52. The best recent biography of Jackson also casts doubt on the "the lemon myth." See James I. Robertson, Jr., *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend* (New York: Macmillan, 1997), ix.

representative of the Lost Cause movement. His work had been enthusiastically received: in the early twentieth century, one literary critic exaggerated only slightly when he described Cooke as “the most widely known and most popular novelist the South has ever had.”⁵ As a professional writer and staff officer under J. E. B. Stuart, no one was better positioned to write a great book about the Civil War.

Cooke never produced such a masterpiece. The literary critic Daniel Aaron has written that “for over a century the War as a subject has not powerfully attracted many of [the South’s] finer talents” and complained instead of the widespread practice of “pseudo-historic” hagiography.⁶ No one epitomized the practice of reverential biography that Aaron complained of in Civil War literature more than Cooke. Cooke’s romantic brand of history especially shaped his understanding of Stonewall Jackson. But Cooke, who captured Jackson’s persona in both biography and a novel, blended hero-worship with an enjoyable and affectionate portrait of a distinctly odd man. The notion of a quirky genius, which still colors public perception of Jackson, first reached the reading public through Cooke’s writing. Many historians have described the Lost Cause as a social movement that depicted white southern values, or even as a “civil religion” that embodied the thought of southern whites.⁷ The story of Cooke and Jackson presents a more complicated picture. Before Confederate heroes were carved in marble, they emerged as literary figures, their lives providing fodder for numerous biographers, memoirists, and amateur historians.

The son of a financially struggling lawyer, in the antebellum period literary success became synonymous with financial reward for Cooke. Though proud of his southern heritage, Cooke turned to the North as an outlet for his writing because southern magazines such as *Russell’s* and the *Southern Literary Messenger* could not afford to pay their contributors.⁸ His hopes of earning a living seemed fulfilled when between 1856 and 1860 he placed twelve articles or stories in issues of *Harper’s Monthly*. Cooke averaged eight hundred dollars annually

5. Carl Halliday, quoted in Introduction, John Esten Cooke, *Poe as a Literary Critic*, ed. N. Bryllion Fagin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1946), viii.

6. Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1973), 339–40.

7. Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 12; Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, The Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

8. Mary Jo Bratton, “John Esten Cooke and His ‘Confederate Lies,’” *Southern Literary Journal* 13.2 (1981): 161–67.

from his magazine and newspaper contributions.⁹ Cooke's romantic view of the past made him a popular success. In the 1850s "he had made a name in letters and a reputation which brought him money, work, and fame . . ." ¹⁰

Cooke's reputation as the Virginia writer par excellence grew in 1854 after the appearance of *The Virginia Comedians*, a historical romance set in the revolutionary period. Following in the tradition of William Gilmore Simms, James Fenimore Cooper, and Sir Walter Scott, Cooke believed that fiction must be grounded in ideas gleaned from the study of history. *The Virginia Comedians* reveals an author of strong republican principles. Cooke's fiction fit into a growing body of work that scholars have described as the plantation novel, but Cooke's plantation ideal had more in common with the democracy of Jefferson than the conservatism of the pre-Revolutionary gentry. In the *Virginia Comedians*, much of the action focuses on young and aristocratic Virginian Champ Effingham, who "has thousands of acres, and hundreds of negroes."¹¹ Enervated by luxury, Champ became a "lazy" man of such "languid indifference" that he would order a slave to pick up his book when it slipped from his hand to the floor.¹² *The Virginia Comedians* culminates with a dramatic speech by Patrick Henry. Henry galvanizes an insurrectionary crowd with his oratory, and declares triumphantly, "the Revolution is begun!"¹³

Cooke later explained how the book functioned as a piece of social commentary: "[T]he 'Virginia Comedians' [was] intended to be a picture of our curiously graded Virginia society before the Revolution. The book is profoundly democratic and American—the aristocracy whom I don't like, getting the worst of it. I think the republican character has given the work its success."¹⁴ A success it was: one Virginia newspaper described the novel as "among the most brilliant emanations of our American literary world," while *Harper's* and the *Southern Literary Messenger* offered glowing reviews. The book was even produced as a play.¹⁵

9. John Esten Cooke to George William Bagby, 6 July 1859, Cooke Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

10. G. Buodoni Wuffin, "I Go To See John Esten Cooke," *Native Virginian*, 29 May 1866, clipping in Barrett Waller Collection, UV.

11. John Esten Cooke, *The Virginia Comedians* (1854; reprint, Ridgewood, N. J., Gregg Press, 1968), I: 22.

12. Cooke, *Virginia Comedians*, I: 41, 60, 18.

13. Cooke, *Virginia Comedians*, II: 279.

14. John Esten Cooke to Rufus Wilmot Griswold, 28 May 1855, Cooke Papers, Library of Congress (LC).

15. Newspaper clipping, 24 August 1857 in Barrett Waller Collection, UV; *Harper's*, IX (November 1854), 858–59; *Southern Literary Messenger*, XX (October 1854), 638.

In spite of what Cooke called its “republican character,” *The Virginia Comedians* was hardly a radical work by the standards of antebellum America. The political ideal that Cooke had in mind was a natural aristocracy of the Jeffersonian sort, in which talented and virtuous individuals held that “lofty glance peculiar to men born to lead and rule. . . .”¹⁶ For Cooke, the ideal of the natural aristocrat overlapped with a romantic belief in individual brilliance that confounded surface appearances. Patrick Henry, this “ungainly man, clad so rudely, and speaking with such a clownish accent, was a born leader of men—a thinker of new thoughts.”¹⁷ Henry’s passion contrasted with the torpor of the aristocracy, whose loyalty to the Revolutionary cause remained in doubt.¹⁸

Cooke’s portrait of Henry as a natural leader dovetailed with a belief about genius that enjoyed “widespread currency” by the early years of the nineteenth century. This doctrine was articulated most memorably by prominent writers such as Byron, Hugo, and Goethe. As Drew Gilpin Faust has noted, by the 1830s and 40s one “finds repeated references to these generally accepted concepts [of genius] in Southern popular oratory and the press. The region’s infatuation with Scott and medieval chivalry included as well an enthusiastic embrace of the idea of the genius, who was, after all, merely a specialized form of romantic hero.” By the time Thomas Carlyle wrote *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* in 1841, the romantic theory of genius had permeated American popular biography, as hero-worship met people’s need for certainty in a market-based economy that elevated impersonal forces over individual striving. Romantic writers believed that biography should influence the reader’s character through “inspiration, not imitation.” For romantics, the quest for the “inner man distinguished the biographer from the historian.”¹⁹ The fascination with individual genius was not distinctively southern: Ralph Waldo Emerson likewise held the romantic notion that “to believe your own thought . . . that is genius.”²⁰

16. John Esten Cooke, *The Virginia Comedians*, I: 106–07.

17. *Ibid.*, 181.

18. William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (1957; reprint, New York: G. Braziller, 1963), 304.

19. Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840–1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 23; Scott Caspar, *Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 209, 202, 7; John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Political Nationalism, 1830–1860* (New York: Norton, 1992), 141–76. On Scott, see Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (1949; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 72–77.

20. Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (1841), *Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 259.

For Carlyle, who Cooke much admired, the "History of the World . . . was the Biography of Great Men." Carlyle admired the modern revolutionaries Oliver Cromwell and Napoleon Bonaparte, believing that "whatsoever of earthly or spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here, to *command* over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and the hour what we are to *do*."²¹ Nineteenth-century Americans had learned about Cromwell, the zealot and general who Cooke would later compare to Jackson, from the admiring Carlyle's documentary biography.²²

Jefferson embodied the democratic ideal of natural leadership that Cooke admired. To Cooke, Jefferson was "naturally a democrat, and held as a radical doctrine of his philosophy that one man is no better than another." Like Carlyle's great men, Jefferson was "an original thinker," but his individuality merely affirmed his desire to "overthrow the old colonial ruling classes, and raise the people."²³ Attached to an idealized vision of Jeffersonian democracy, Cooke even penned a novel set in Jefferson's college days, which Merrill Petersen has described as the first "humanization" of Jefferson in American literature.²⁴

In spite of his literary success, Cooke believed that by the 1850s, the "Virginia Gentleman [was] intensely aristocratic" in "the contempt they felt toward every man who chanced not to be born a 'gentleman.'" A man of the people might distinguish himself "ever so much, but the invisible barrier between him and the 'gentry' defied his utmost efforts to remove it."²⁵ He believed that the "invisible barrier" between classes had mattered little to Jefferson. Cooke, like other republicans, saw virtue as a quality that could flourish only in special historical circumstances. Republics thrived when men were cultured enough to embrace morality and reason but not so civilized that luxury and commerce enabled the few who ruled society to place self-interest ahead of the public good. Cooke's backward-looking stories of revolutionary heroism suggest that he echoed his pessimistic fellow Virginians who believed that the state's best days were behind

21. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, (1841; reprint, London: Macmillan, 1963), 17, 257.

22. Thomas Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, 4 vols. (1845; reprint, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1897).

23. John Esten Cooke, "Thomas Jefferson," *Southern Literary Messenger* 39 (May 1860): 338.

24. John Esten Cooke, *The Youth of Jefferson, or a Chronicle of College Scrapes* (New York: Redfield, 1854); Merrill Petersen, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 152.

25. John Esten Cooke, "The Cocked-Hat Gentry," *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* IV (March, 1854): 263.

it, and that Virginia now produced few men of genius.²⁶ In an incisive and humorous critique of Cooke's early work, Cooke's friend and fellow writer George William Bagby criticized Cooke for having "eyes . . . in the back of his head . . . It is yesterday he sees all the time." Bagby urged Cooke to "set up in the present" and to portray "today."²⁷

Fortunately for Cooke's career as a writer, the Civil War came. No longer would he look solely to the distant past. Cooke believed that the conflict offered him an extraordinary opportunity to grow as an author. He thought that "if I get thro' this war I will have much to write of—if."²⁸ Cooke's position as a staff officer under Stuart allowed him to rub elbows with many of the most visible and distinctive heroes of the Army of Northern Virginia, including Robert E. Lee and Jackson. His diary also notes Cooke's own unabashed admiration of Jackson: "What a curious eye he has—as brilliant as a diamond! He is a hero." His praise for Jackson was so high that he could write "I believe that I am regarded as the *Jackson Man* of these Hdqrs."²⁹

Cooke did not enjoy life as a soldier, and certainly it did not help his military career that Stuart viewed him as a "colossal bore."³⁰ Cooke's main ambition remained progressing as an author. On reading Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* in camp, he noted: "what a genius! and what am *I* to write?"³¹ Cooke found little inspiration in the lives of rank-and-file soldiers, the wartime counterparts of the poor but noble characters that Hugo had glorified in *Les Misérables*. Cooke viewed the Civil War as too impersonal for his artistic imagination. After the war he told his friend George Cary Eggleston, "I never liked the business of war . . . in modern war, where men are organized in masses and converted into insensate

26. Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (1980; reprint Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 69; Harry Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 46–47; James Oakes, "From Republicanism to Liberalism: Ideological Change and the Crisis of the Old South," *American Quarterly* 37.4 (Autumn 1985): 551–71.

27. George W. Bagby, "Unkind but Complete Destruction of John Esten Cooke, Novelist," *Richmond Whig*, 9 August 1859, quoted in John O. Beaty, *John Esten Cooke, Virginian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), 69.

28. Cooke quoted in John O. Beaty, *John Esten Cooke, Virginian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), 109. As Beaty notes, the loss of this diary left the first two years of Cooke's war service largely unrecorded. See Beaty, 77.

29. John Esten Cooke diary, quoted 31 January, 26 March 1863, in Jay B. Hubbell, ed., "The War Diary of John Esten Cooke," *Civil War History* VII (November 1941): 525–40.

30. John Esten Cooke, *Civil War Diary*, n. d. Duke University Library (DUL); Stuart quoted in *Emory Thomas, Bold Dragoon: The Life of J. E. B. Stuart* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 94.

31. Cooke Civil War diary, n. d., DUL.

machines, there is really nothing heroic or romantic or in any way calculated to appeal to the imagination."³²

Given his perception of the war, Cooke's writing on the conflict emphasized the exploits of leaders more than the accomplishments of rank-and-file soldiers. In a series of articles published for the *Southern Illustrated News* in 1862, Cooke examined "Stonewall Jackson and the Old Stonewall Brigade" in a manner calculated to win popular acclaim for Jackson. Cooke half-heartedly denied that he wrote in a "hero-worshipping spirit." Yet even if Cooke claimed he was not one to "stand hat in hand . . . or make profound obsequious obeisance" he made clear that he believed Jackson to be "a real hero."³³ While Cooke met Jackson as a staff officer, he was never on intimate terms with the general. His portrait of Jackson would be based largely on rumor and recycled newspaper coverage, in addition to his own flights of fancy. In spite of the limitations of his approach, the talented writer managed to distill an image of Jackson that would prove enduring.

Heroism was vital to Cooke's understanding of the war because it humanized a conflict that would otherwise be simply abstract and impersonal. Cooke argued that generalship mattered most because "when the opposing forces are anything like equal, war is a contest of brains. It is the Generals who do the fighting, so to speak, and not the soldiers." Cooke viewed war as a chess game, in which, "one side is victor because his plans were deeper, his insight into those of the enemy more penetrating."³⁴ He compared Jackson to the nineteenth-century chess master Paul Charles Morphy, a "born warrior," an intuitive "genius of the first order."³⁵ The sketches in "Stonewall Jackson and the Stonewall Brigade" are great-man history, concerned far more with the genius of the general than the brigade that bore his name. Like other southern historians, Cooke's work on Jackson "celebrated civic virtues." For these writers, the private character of historic figures mattered if it was "publicly useful."³⁶

Cooke's praise for the plain and humble Jackson fit neatly with his previous criticism of the "aristocracy" in earlier works such as the *Virginia Comedians*.

32. John Esten Cooke quoted in George Cary Eggleston, *Recollections of a Varied Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1910), 70–71.

33. John Esten Cooke in Richard Barksdale Harwell, ed., *Stonewall Jackson and the Old Stonewall Brigade* (1863; reprint Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1954), 8–9.

34. *Ibid.*, 39–40.

35. *Ibid.*, 36–41.

36. Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 667.

Stonewall was a republican rebel with “the very bull-dog pertinacity and iron nerve of Cromwell—sworn to conquer or to die.” No plantation aristocrat or scion of a First Family of Virginia—he was a “plain, simple-looking personage” in a faded cap.³⁷ In fact, Jackson’s plainness became for Cooke evidence of his bona fides as a democratic hero: “. . . on horseback his appearance is anything but prepossessing . . .” When placed on a battle field, however, he “becomes a hero . . . full of fire and energy.”³⁸

Like Carlyle’s heroic Cromwell, Jackson was a figure of “native and unforced simplicity.” Jackson emerged “sui generis,” Cooke wrote. And nothing better emphasized the manner in which Jackson departed from the style of the gentry than his “peculiar” nature. A master of colorful detail, Cooke asserted that Jackson had a penchant for talking to himself on the battlefield and raising a hand in prayer while riding his horse. Surely a general who had such peculiar habits had “nothing of the ‘pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war’ about him.”³⁹

According to Cooke, affection for “Old Jack” was universal among his men no matter what their social class. From the “humblest of the sons of toil, [to] the flower of the land” Jackson’s soldiers watched him with wonder and pride. Yet along with describing these positive feelings he evoked in his men, Cooke also repeated popular stories that truly made Jackson seem odd. Cooke portrayed Jackson doing a number of unusual things, such as retiring to sleep while “booted and spurred,” and taking icy water showers in “puris naturalibus.” Cooke recounted apocryphal tales in which Jackson “slaps his hand on his side as he rides; his lips are ever moving in ejaculatory prayer.”⁴⁰ Here the image of Jackson’s lemon sucking appeared in print for the first time, as Cooke described the general “moving about slowly and sucking a lemon.” The writer attempted to explain the tropical fruit’s unlikely presence behind Confederate lines in Virginia by describing it as “Yankee spoil, no doubt.”⁴¹ Other colorful stories, which included accounts of Jackson wearing a faded old uniform and forage cap, all testified to Jackson’s republican “simplicity”: the “utter absence of all pretension,

37. Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson and the Old Stonewall Brigade*, 40–43.

38. *Ibid.*, 26–27.

39. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

40. *Ibid.*, 24–25.

41. *Ibid.*, 10. After many years, Jackson’s widow Mary Anna Jackson denied that Jackson was ever in the habit of sucking lemons. See Mary Anna Jackson, quoted in *New York Times*, 29 October 1911.

or parade, or ostentation.”⁴² Cooke made no attempt to verify the truth of claims that Jackson talked to himself. It was enough that they made a good story and that his audience wanted to believe them. In short, Jackson's eccentricity gave him an aura of authenticity and thus made him a suitably democratic icon.

Cooke's work was influential in part because so little reliable information about the general was available. Before his death in May 1863, Jackson's image befuddled journalists. In 1862, the *New York Times* described the air of mystery that surrounded Jackson: he was “a man of our own times, about whom the truth is comparatively easy to be known—and yet the origins, antecedents and training of the man are debated even if he were a dead Egyptian.”⁴³ Into this vacuum, stories about the general's strangeness would circulate widely.

Stories from camp about Jackson's oddities appeared in the Confederate press rarely, if ever, before Jackson's death. This should not be surprising: it would have been disconcerting to Confederates to portray a man of such importance to the public as strange. But such stories circulated privately among some of those who knew Jackson, and their camp gossip clearly affected Cooke's account. Jackson's sister-in-law, Margaret Junkin Preston, whose husband John Preston served with Jackson, recorded in her wartime diary about Jackson's habit of uplifting his hands in prayer during battle. John A. Harman, a profane but efficient quartermaster whose services Jackson found indispensable, confided in a wartime letter that “Jackson is a strange man . . . a cracked man.” General Richard Ewell, who served under Jackson, regarded his superior as an “enthusiastic fanatic” in matters of religion.⁴⁴ While these contemporary anecdotes circulated about Jackson's alleged oddities, Cooke did something that those who wrote in private could not. He publicly shaped a well-crafted image of an eccentric genius that would influence future accounts of the general's personality.

Following the death of Jackson after the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863, the Richmond publishers Ayers and Wade convinced Cooke to expand his sketches from the *Southern Illustrated News* into a full-length treatment of the general. Cooke wrote the biography at a frenetic pace between May and

42. Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson and the Old Stonewall Brigade*, 20–25.

43. *New York Herald*, 10 September 1862; *New York Times*, 21 September 1862.

44. Margaret Junkin Preston, *War Journal*, 3 July 1862 in Elizabeth Preston Allan, *The Life and Letters of Margaret J. Preston* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1903), 143; John A. Harman to Asher W. Harman, 27 April 1862, Jedediah Hotchkiss Papers, LC; Richard S. Ewell to Lizzie Ewell, 13 March 1862, Richard S. Ewell Papers, LC, quoted in J. Tracy Power, “‘There Stands Jackson Like a Stonewall’: The Image of General Thomas J. ‘Stonewall’ Jackson in the Confederate Mind, July 1861–November 1861” (MA Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1984), 41.

September of 1863, pausing only to fight in the Gettysburg campaign. His portrait of Jackson borrowed heavily from a mix of the oral tradition of the Confederate army, newspaper clippings, and the writer's own active imagination. He took on the project because of the "keen desire of the public to have some account . . . of one who had become almost their idol."⁴⁵

The book's remarkable sales far outpaced Cooke's antebellum fiction. As the *Southern Illustrated News* put it, "no book ever issued in this country has met with as ready and extensive sales as the 'Life of Jackson.' Three thousand copies were sold the first day." The *Richmond Record* noted that "the present edition of the Life is selling more rapidly than the latest novel." In his diary, Cooke referred to rumors that 60,000 copies of a pirated New York version of the book had been sold behind Union lines, leading General Ambrose Burnside to ban its circulation. Cooke doubted the veracity of these claims, but in fact sales had been so impressive with the Union army that it did interdict the book, which Burnside claimed was "put forth by the traitors themselves, and republished in the loyal states for the purpose of stirring up discontent and sedition." One might wonder why Northerners wanted to read a book that praised the enemy, but the most plausible explanation is sheer curiosity about the subject at a time when Cooke's account was the best available.⁴⁶

Cooke's romantic conception of individual genius, which meshed with his belief in a natural aristocracy of talent and virtue, played a central role in his first full-length Jackson biography. In fact, he used the word "genius" at least seventeen times in reference to Jackson and offered synonyms for the word beyond counting. Cooke apparently had little information about Jackson's early life at his disposal, so he dispensed with Jackson's life until 1861 in five error-ridden pages. Unable to trace Jackson's character from youth, the author relied on Jackson's reputation for "unique individuality" to explain his military genius and historic destiny.⁴⁷

To demonstrate Jackson's singularity, the quality so valued by romantics, Cooke offered an exaggerated depiction of the socially awkward general's "eccentricities" and "peculiarities of character."⁴⁸ Cooke argued that the Civil War stripped away Jackson's reputation as a "somewhat eccentric 'professor.'" The

45. John Esten Cooke, "The Adventures of a ms. Life of Jackson," newspaper clipping in Cooke scrapbook, Cooke Collection, Library of Congress (LC).

46. Notebook, n.d. circa 1863, Cooke Collection, UV; *Richmond Record*, 24 September 1863, in John Esten Cooke notebook, UV; OR Series I, Vol. XXXIX, part 2, 7.

47. Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson*, 16.

48. *Ibid.*, 111.

war inevitably brought Jackson's brilliance to the forefront, because "war reveals men: falsifying all estimates previously made in days of peace." He was "possessed by nature of the distinguishing characteristics of a leader of men—of Alexander, of Caesar, of Napoleon."⁴⁹ Jackson's brilliance had gone unnoticed before the war, when he was sometimes mocked by students as an ineffective and pedantic teacher: "The universal tendency to caricature the peculiarities of a man of original genius is well known—to make fun of those very traits which separate such men from the common-place mass of human beings." Cooke shared the belief common among Civil War soldiers that true character emerged under fire.⁵⁰

Cooke emphasized Jackson's unusually public religious faith by comparing him to Cromwell. Cooke suggested that Jackson and Cromwell both owed their historical greatness to God's design: "Cromwell might have remained a brewer—Jackson an unknown professor, but for both these iron souls Providence had decreed and shaped their work."⁵¹ Given Cooke's familiarity with Carlyle, and the genuinely admiring tone of Carlyle's work on the English leader, such a comparison was meant to be flattering. Cooke persisted with the comparison in spite of warnings from Dabney, who viewed Cromwell as an unhinged fanatic.⁵²

The 1863 biography not only praised Jackson but also captured the author's unvarnished contempt for the Union and its soldiers. Cooke believed Jackson's offensive tactics were warranted because the Confederacy had been forced to fight "dirty Federal stragglers in blue coats, with coarse, low-browed faces, full of deceit and vulgarity—that vulgarity of the soul which is in these people, and can no more be rooted out than the spots of the leopard be changed, or the skin of the Ethiopian made white."⁵³ Cooke would later write that he buried his silver spurs on the field at Appomattox to avoid surrendering them to the victorious Union army.⁵⁴ Bitterness toward the Union lingered, as Cooke only slowly let go of the idea that the North was responsible for "cruelties which remain for the centuries the opprobrium of that race and country."⁵⁵

49. Ibid., 108, 271.

50. Ibid., 19; Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 7–16. See also James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 77–89.

51. Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson*, 17.

52. Dabney, *Life and Campaigns*, 711–28.

53. Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson*, 194–95.

54. Beaty, *John Esten Cooke, Virginian*, 85.

55. John Esten Cooke, unpublished ms. on the women of the Confederacy, UV.

The end of the war was accompanied by a collapse in the value of Confederate money that Cooke had earned for his biography, and as a result, he found himself “absolutely penniless.” Cooke remarked that financial pressures dominated his life in 1866: “the terrible demoralizing war has made groveling creatures of us, with scarce a thought, but how we shall keep body and soul together.” Humiliated by defeat and poverty, in 1866 Cooke declared the “blythest day of my life would be that in which I walked into the Hall of Congress with a musket. If that be treason then make the most of it.”⁵⁶

In spite of his desire to fight, Cooke had to acknowledge that the Confederacy had been defeated at the time of Lee’s surrender. He quickly squelched his anger. Swallowing his pride, he cultivated literary friendships he had begun before the conflict, especially with Evert Duyckinck, who had edited Appleton’s *Cyclopaedia*, to which Cooke had contributed in the 1850s.⁵⁷ Putting his northern connections to use, Cooke began a series of sketches of leading generals and heroic officers for the *New York World* in the summer of 1865. This project, which would later be published in book form as *The Wearing of the Gray*, paid ten dollars a column. The cash must have seemed a godsend.⁵⁸

Cooke immediately envisioned publishing a revised biography of Stonewall Jackson. In spite of its popularity, the first Jackson biography, written during the Confederacy, was a “poor affair, written in three or four weeks.” Yet Cooke had rewritten the book in early 1864 and intended to “publish it when there is a market for it.”⁵⁹ However, this manuscript proved unsuitable for postwar publication in the North because it was filled with invective against the Union and unabashed paeans to the southern cause.⁶⁰

Instead, Cooke crafted his 1866 novel *Surry of Eagle’s Nest* to tell the story of Stonewall Jackson from the viewpoint of a Confederate staff officer. Cooke promised his friend and agent Duyckinck that the book would avoid controversial material. Surry, the protagonist, would be a “man of moderation, discretion,

56. John Esten Cooke to Mrs. Sally Duval, 19 June 1866, Barrett-Cooke Collection, UV; John Esten Cooke to Thomas S. Snead, 16 April 1866, Cooke Collection, LC.

57. John Esten Cooke, *Southern Literary Messenger*, July 1854, 446; John R. Welsh, ed., *Autobiographical Memo* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), 1–3.

58. John Esten Cooke, *The Wearing of the Gray* (1867; reprint, Gaithersburg, Md.: Olde Soldier Books, 1988); Advertisement, *Petersburg Index*, 4 March 1867. On Cooke’s portrait of Stuart, see Paul Escott, “The Uses of Gallantry: Virginians and the Origins of J. E. B. Stuart’s Historical Image,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 103.1 (1995): 47–72.

59. John Esten Cooke to E. A. Duyckinck, 15 July 1865, New York Public Library (NYPL).

60. Beaty, *John Esten Cooke*, 89–91.

cool pulse, fair views, and philosophic temperament . . . not a line in the book could wound the feeling of any one." Privately, Cooke bemoaned that he had produced "a mild book—hang it."⁶¹ But this seemingly inoffensive work, which Cooke accurately referred to as a "mélange of history and fiction," would net him a substantial advance and even greater royalties.⁶² It became the most popular work of his career.

Surry of Eagle's Nest was a romance that celebrated Stonewall Jackson, and Cooke's characterization of the general had altered little as he switched from biography to fiction. The fictional Jackson made a strange sight on the battlefield. He walked with a "peculiarly awkward stride, and his seat in the saddle . . . was very ungraceful." The narrator, Colonel Surry, "thought him matter-of-fact in character, rather dull in conversation, and possessed only of average abilities. He seemed a plodding, eccentric, commonplace martinet."⁶³ War would reveal the character of Jackson, as Col. Surry, a character loosely based on Cooke himself, began to discern Jackson's true mettle when they came under fire at First Bull Run. In combat, Jackson clearly possessed "the supreme attributes of a man of military genius. He seemed to rise under pressure, and to grow cooler and more invincible as peril drew near . . . his movements were as calm and measured as if upon parade."⁶⁴

Cooke presented Jackson not just as a military genius but also as the embodiment of Virginia democracy. His troops represented a cross-section of Virginia society, as "all classes were mingled fraternally in its ranks, by the hand of that great leveler called War. Here was the high-spirited boy, raised in his elegant home on the banks of the Shenandoah, and the hardy and athletic mountaineer from beyond the Alleghenies."⁶⁵ Jackson cared little for honor, glory, or worldly ambition. Instead, he fought for unnamed "principles." To Surry, "the plainly-clad form before me was that of a born hero and master of men."⁶⁶

Cooke's portrait of Jackson as a democratic hero ducked the issues of sectional bitterness that still preoccupied the writer. Seeking to soothe Northern audiences,

61. John Esten Cooke to E. A. Duyckinck, 7 December 1865, NYPL; John Esten Cooke, Notebook, 21 December 1865, Cooke Collection, UV.

62. John Esten Cooke, "Notebook 1865–66," Cooke Collection, UV; John Esten Cooke, Notebook, 21 December 1865, Cooke Collection, UV.

63. Cooke, *Surry of Eagle's Nest* (1866, reprint, Ridgewood, N.J., Gregg Press, 1968), 81.

64. *Ibid.*, 138.

65. *Ibid.*, 458.

66. *Ibid.*, 459–60.

he declared that “the question has been tried—the issue is dead, for the present, and let it rest.” The writer offered a fictional set of “memoirs” and intended to “carefully avoid writing a history of the war . . . I aim only at giving you a few pictures and relating some incidents.” Those “pictures” must have seemed very compelling to readers as the book was quickly reprinted. One confused reader even wrote to Cooke asking for the mailing address of the fictional Colonel Surry. The success of the book was enough to meet Cooke’s “most sanguine expectations.”⁶⁷

In 1866, Cooke produced yet another biography of Jackson: the lengthy *Stonewall Jackson: A Military Biography*. This time he further watered down the pro-Confederate rhetoric. The book offered little that was new regarding Cooke’s assessment of Jackson, instead covering more thoroughly Jackson’s military campaigns. It was “exquisitely printed” and bound with leather and gold trim. As the new Jackson biography went to press, Cooke worked assiduously behind the scenes to prevent the reprinting of his original 1863 Jackson biography, which had been published under a pseudonym.⁶⁸

In this new book, Cooke refrained from the diatribes against federal soldiers who marred his 1863 work. Instead, the author placed new emphasis on Jackson’s humble origins. “The Jacksons,” Cooke wrote, “did not belong to that class of planters, living in luxury and elegance on the seaboard, but to that energetic, intelligent, and thrifty population which settled in Western Virginia.” Cooke briefly recounted the story of Jackson’s childhood, concluding “the child was thus left, upon the very threshold of life, to learn the hard lessons of poverty.” The “eccentricities” of the socially awkward boy were evident as early as his days at West Point, but the “kindness and simplicity of the hardworking youth” seemed evident to all.⁶⁹ Jackson emerged fully in this portrait as a democratic hero and son of the Western mountains. For Cooke, Jackson symbolized the popular nature of the Confederate army. Cooke wrote of regiments that contained “persons of all ages and distinctions—old men and boys, the humblest of the sons of toil and the heirs of the most ancient families—but there was no distinction which separated them.”⁷⁰

67. Ibid., 79; Albert W. Newport to John Esten Cooke, 29 May 1868, in Barrett Waller Collection, UV; F. J. Huntington to John Esten Cooke, 15 July 1867, Cooke Papers, DUL.

68. Beaty, *John Esten Cooke, Virginian*, 89–91; John Esten Cooke to E. A. Duyckinck, November 28, 1865, NYPL.

69. John Esten Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson: A Military Biography* (New York: D. Appleton, 1866), 9–10, 13.

70. Cooke, *Stonewall Jackson*, 44.

Jackson's plain and "peculiar" mannerisms embodied the popular nature of the Confederate army. Cooke noted that in the Civil War the "idea of the general is a finely-dressed individual, covered with braid, mounted upon a prancing charger, and followed by numerous and glittering staff." Jackson's seemingly strange appearance in a "sun-embrowned" and "dingy" coat stood in marked contrast to the "popular fancy" of how a general should look. Jackson's unusual style, which was distinctively and extraordinarily plain and simple, helped account for his popularity: "the men of the Stonewall Brigade loved that coat, and admired it and its owner more than all the holiday uniforms and holiday warriors in the world."⁷¹ Wearing worn, almost sloppy clothes, Jackson represented republican virtue blended with the genius of the romantic hero. Jackson resembled the heroes of Cooke's antebellum fiction, as the general had an innate nobility of character that defined the natural aristocrat.⁷²

Eager to capitalize on the war, the former rebel enthusiast would "agree to disagree" on sectional issues with his Northern publishers. The new biography of Jackson was "as fair as I could make it" and did not "detract from his adversaries whose gallantry is often remarked and praised." Northern reviewers of *Stonewall Jackson: A Military Biography* agreed that Cooke "effects his purpose with fairness, neither displaying any want of generosity to his opponents nor making extravagant claims for the heroes of his own side."⁷³ Yet in private Cooke remained bitter. His anger simmered long after the war, as he wrote in an unpublished manuscript in 1870 that "the North seemed possessed by the devil of hatred and aggression . . . she endeavored by striking at negro slavery to overwhelm the whole southern polity in ruin." Still, cooperation with the kind of men that Cooke's friend Simms referred to as "stupid publishers" allowed him the income to refurbish his Shenandoah Valley estate, The Briars. Cooke reached such a point of success that the prolific author could play the gentleman and list his occupation in the 1870 census as "farming."⁷⁴

While still angry about the outcome of the war, Cooke relished Northern praise for his work, which he filed in a scrapbook. Such plaudits came quickly: the *New*

71. Ibid., 196–97.

72. Bratton, *Southern Literary Journal*, 86.

73. *Boston Atheneum*, 29 December 1866, quoted in William Edward Walker, "John Esten Cooke: A Critical Biography" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1957), 493.

74. William Gilmore Simms to John Esten Cooke, 2 December 1868, Cooke Family Papers, DUL; "On the Road to Despotism," unpublished ms. 1870, 118–19, Cooke Family Papers, DUL; 1870 US Census, Clarke County, Virginia, 19 July 1870.

York Record and Vindicator declared "John Esten Cooke, seems destined to be, to this generation, at least the Waverly of the war."⁷⁵ Between 1867 and 1871 he published three more romanticized war novels and a reverent biography of Robert E. Lee.⁷⁶ But his popularity began slipping. *Surry* had sold very well, but the later work did not, mostly because "the North is surfeited with War books & the South are not buying books of any kind in these times."⁷⁷

Cooke's experience may deepen our understanding of the South's Lost Cause movement. In crafting an image of Stonewall Jackson that would appeal to the Northern publishers, Cooke necessarily suppressed issues and emotions that stood as barriers to harmony between the sections, such as Jackson's penchant for destructive wars.⁷⁸ Historian David Blight has suggested that romantic portraits by Cooke and writers like him amounted to "purposeful nostalgia" in which Southerners tried to "refashion war memories into cultural and political dividends." For Cooke, Civil War writing for Northern publishers was primarily a financial necessity rather than a purposeful strategy. The talented Cooke refused to become a spokesman for the defeated South because much of the publishing industry, as well as the audience for Civil War books, lay in the North. Cooke presented a sanitized image of the war designed to appeal to Northern publishers. "I write for money . . . money and my own satisfaction," Cooke bragged in a private letter, noting the small fortune of \$20,000 he had collected for his books on the Confederacy.⁷⁹ But Cooke's approach carried considerable cultural currency as the country moved toward reconciliation. His depiction of the war included telling half-truths that would not alienate the North and therefore had the unintended consequence of fostering sectional reconciliation on a pro-Southern basis.⁸⁰

Cooke's reputation waned in the 1870s as public interest in wartime themes declined. As Cooke rushed to publish in the postwar years, discriminating review-

75. *New York Record and Vindicator*, 8 December 1868, Barrett Waller Collection, UV.

76. John Esten Cooke, *Hilt to Hilt* (New York: Carleton, 1868); John Esten Cooke, *Mohun, or the Last Days of Lee and His Paladins* (New York: F. J. Huntington, 1869); John Esten Cooke, *Hammer and Rapier* (1870; reprint, New York: Carleton, 1898); John Esten Cooke, *A Life of Gen. Robert E. Lee* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1871).

77. F. J. Huntington to John Esten Cooke, 24 April 1868, Cooke Papers, DUL.

78. On Jackson as a relentless warrior, see Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1991), 73–75. For a more sympathetic portrait of Jackson see Robertson, Jr., *Stonewall Jackson*.

79. John Esten Cooke to George William Bagby, 16 July 1879, Bagby Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

80. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 156–57; John Esten Cooke Journal, 31 March 1866, UV.

ers began to view him with skepticism. The Republican *New York Times* argued in 1871 that Cooke might write a "powerful novel" if he only "thought proper to take time for the purpose and bend his energies to the task . . ." ⁸¹ The rise of realist authors such as William Dean Howells and George Eliot further damaged Cooke's marketability and critical reputation. Cooke remained committed to his romantic style, believing that "dramatic effect and incident are the sails which carry along [a book] whatever the new 'Middlemarch' critics may say." ⁸² Yet as the financial returns on his Civil War writings diminished, he was forced to abandon the subject. As late as 1881 he attempted to find outlets for historical writing about the war, but he met with limited success, because Northern publishers found "they have usually lost money on such ventures." ⁸³

Cooke kept writing, but his reputation declined long before his death in 1886, as Southerners increasingly embraced the New South creed of material progress. As the *Atlanta Constitution* explained in 1903, "conditions have changed since William Gilmore Simms and John Esten Cooke were our novelists . . . our civilization is different." ⁸⁴ Still, many of Cooke's works would remain in print in the early twentieth century, and a scholarly biography of the writer was published by Columbia University Press in 1922. But in spite of his biographer's earnest argument for the quality of Cooke's writing, his reputation has fallen to a point where he scarcely figures even in surveys of American literature. ⁸⁵

Yet Cooke and the later memoirists such as Taylor, who treated their audience to stories of Jackson's eccentricity, such as raising his hand in prayer during battle, grasped something important that Jackson's reverent authorized biographer, Dabney, had failed to understand. Dabney, whose book was a commercial failure, did not see that the portrait of Jackson's alleged quirks humanized him, making him more attractive to a mass audience. ⁸⁶

In 1898, the British staff officer G. F. R. Henderson wrote the first scholarly biography of Jackson. Henderson, who viewed Jackson with admiration, dealt skeptically with the idea of Jackson's eccentricity. While admitting that Jackson

81. *New York Times*, 10 April 1871.

82. John Esten Cooke Notebook, 18 April 1874, Cooke Papers, UV.

83. George Cary Eggleston to John Esten Cooke, 31 July 1881, Barrett-Eggleston Papers, UV.

84. Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1970); Mrs. L. H. Harris, *Atlanta Constitution*, 22 November 1903.

85. Beaty, *John Esten Cooke*, 163.

86. Wallace Hettle, "The Minister, the Martyr, and the Maxim: Robert Lewis Dabney and Stonewall Jackson Biography," *Civil War History* 49.4 (December 2003): 353–71.

was “morbidly scrupulous” in his strict observance of the Sabbath, Henderson contended that only “because [Jackson] went his own way and lived by his own rules he was considered eccentric” before the war. While the “shy and silent” Jackson worked at the Virginia Military Institute, his “conscientiousness” seemed absurd to young students because they did not understand the importance of military discipline. Henderson recounted but minimized tales of Jackson’s eccentricity, from his interest in hydropathic medicine to his strange ideas about his health and diet. For example, Jackson believed that if he “bent over his work the compression of his internal organs might increase their tendency to disease.” Henderson believed that from a small grain of truth, such as the tales promoted by Cooke, ridiculous stories emerged: “As he rose to fame, men listened greedily to those who could speak of him from personal knowledge; the anecdotes which they related were quickly distorted; the slightest peculiarities of walk, speech or gesture were greatly exaggerated.”⁸⁷

In spite of Henderson’s questioning some accounts of Jackson’s peculiarities, and the difficulty of determining just how strange Jackson really was, such tales never ceased to entertain. In 1911, the prominent Virginia novelist Mary Johnston, whose historical fiction included the best-selling novel of 1900, *To Have and to Hold*, borrowed heavily from Cooke in her highly popular novel of Jackson’s army, *The Long Roll*. Early in the book, which she based on extensive historical research in both primary and secondary sources, she emphasized his oddness: “an awkward inarticulate and peculiar man, with strange notions about his health . . . there was about him no breath of grace, romance, or pomp of war.” Her portrait of Jackson resembled an embellished version of Cooke’s. Again and again, Johnston mentioned Jackson’s supposed hypochondria, his dingy uniform, his habit of praying during battle, his sucking on lemons, and his feet, which were supposed to be large and awkward.⁸⁸

In later years, more scholarly historians often dismissed Cooke as a facile writer who seemingly disliked revision. Henderson noted in 1898 that “Cooke’s Life of Jackson is still popular, and deservedly so” in spite of the fact that his “picturesque and lifelike” accounts of battle could not be fully credited as “sober history.” Douglass Southall Freeman would later draw on Cooke as a first-hand source for numerous incidents, while simultaneously describing the author with

87. G. F. R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (1898; reprint, New York: De Capo, 1988), 15, 49–50.

88. Mary Johnston, *The Long Roll* (1911; reprint, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 60–61, 321.

skepticism.⁸⁹ In spite of that stated but not always followed policy of caution in citing Cooke on Freeman's part, Jackson's eccentricity remains a critical part of twentieth-century biographies. In books that remain in print today, writers such as the Southern man of letters, Allan Tate, the widely admired historian of the Confederacy, Frank Vandiver, and the popular historian Burke Davis embellished stories of Jackson's strangeness. Despite the impressive recent work of historian James I. Robertson, Jr., who largely discounts allegations of Jackson's peculiarity, the image of the eccentric is too well fixed in the collective imagination to disappear entirely. In spite of his minimizing Jackson's eccentric image, Robertson, an unabashed admirer of Jackson, cannot fully efface the social awkwardness, worn uniform, prayer in battle, and hypochondria that previous biographers who followed Cooke's lead have described.⁹⁰

With Robertson's sympathetic account of a distinctly normal Jackson, the literature on the general seems to have come full circle, back to the denials of eccentricity that characterized the work of early writers such as Dabney. But Cooke's image of Jackson, later incorporated and embellished by others in their work, is not likely to disappear. Cooke's focus on a great general fit neatly with his romantic appreciation of the enduring ideas of individual genius and democratic ideals. Such a contribution is likely to remain an important part of future accounts of Jackson. Cooke's achievement was to cleanse the conflict of horrific violence, suppress his own continuing animosity toward the North, and to make Stonewall Jackson a character that white Americans, North and South, could admire.

89. G. F. R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (1898; reprint, New York: De Capo, 1988), xvi; Douglass Southall Freeman, *The South to Posterity: An Introduction to the Writing of Confederate History* (1939; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 50.

90. For accounts of Jackson as a misunderstood eccentric genius, see Allan Tate, *Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier* (1928; reprint, Nashville: J. S. Sanders & Co., 1991), 50–54; Burke Davis, *They Called Him Stonewall: A Life of Lieutenant General T. J. Jackson, C. S. A.* (New York: Burford Books, 1954), 109–16; Frank E. Vandiver, *Mighty Stonewall* (1957; reprint, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1988), 228, 237, 266, 308. Jackson's quirks are downplayed in Robertson's recent account.